



Emmaus Asia Regional Assembly

Date: 13 - 16 November 2018

Venue: Galaha - Srilanka



Galaha, SRILANKA: Emmaus Asia Regional Assembly was organized at Gami Seva Sevana in Srilanka from 13 to 16 November 2018 in which representatives from India, Bangladesh, Srilanka, Lebanon, Benin & France participated. The minutes of the previous Board meeting held at Beirut in March 2018 has been reviewed and approved by the Assembly, after which the reminder for contributions towards Membership fee and Solidarity sale had been discussed. All groups have paid the Membership fee & Solidarity sale contributions for the year 2018, with some members who paid on the spot.

Thereafter two groups – Tara & Thanapara shared the Mutual health up-to-date

information, and their future activities. Both the groups explained how they work in partnership with local Government, and the functioning of Day care centre. They also shared about Community awareness meetings, Health camps & Health talks, different actions taken towards Governance, Trainings provided on role enhancement to health workers, community representatives & young volunteers, details of membership fee & about steering committee, project outcome as on today, details of networking & alliances, Medicines provided, Sustainability ratio & the future plans in working towards self sufficiency of the programme and Governance.



Patrick and Nathalie from Emmaus International spoke about 'Emmaus Ethical Fund', its present situation, 4 new objectives, how it will be reorganised and how it will help the members, especially on Micro credit programme. Thereafter members present shared their feedback regarding their

participation in World Alternative Forum held at Geneva in September 2018. All members expressed their impressions and experiences in the forum which was very positive. They shared about their opinion regarding the plenary sessions, workshops, cultural programs, the ending march, contribution from external speakers – the organising of all these events was appreciated by all the members. Members also shared about the possible actions they can take with their allies who also participated in the forum, in the coming future. Idea also came up to develop Emmaus Asia calendar with different events in Asia where Emmaus groups could get involved. Emmaus Asia will be working on it together with other members, and will continue discussing about it in next Regional meeting.

Regarding the 2018 Annual Solidarity projects, member groups shared PPT presentations on the progress of projects implemented with 70% grant. It was observed that majority of the groups hadn't utilised their funds fully as funds were received late in July 2018. Hence groups were advised to send the reports after utilisation of full grant, with copies of bills & vouchers. Discussions were also held on the need for continuation of similar activities so that more impact can be seen in the long run, instead of introducing new projects. Thereafter discussion on projects financed by 'Foundation Abbe Pierre' was held. Members who received funds shared about the progress on the activities completed so far. Nathalie & Patrick informed how strict FAP is, and how groups who receive support need to stick to the project agreed from the beginning. Also they informed that a new project should not be applied immediately, when the previous project is in implementation stage.

Next discussion took place on projects to be financed by Emmaus Montbeliard in 2018. Nathalie informed about the farewell given to Micheline, and how EI supported her in the process. Region expressed their sincere thanks for all the support extended by Micheline and the community in the last 6 years. Thereafter Patrick informed the members about the work camp to take place at Lake Nokoué in Benin in the beginning of 2019 with the possible programs and the agenda. There will be around 50 members participating in the work camp from different regions and from local groups and communities in Africa.



Thereafter Nathalie made a PPT presentation on the new criteria for International Solidarity which has been evolved based on the visits made before Jesolo World Assembly to different regions. She informed about the new way of applying online for International Solidarity initiatives, and explained the practical info about the application to be filled by the groups, which will be available in online soon. She also explained the calendar for presenting the projects to different committees (EC, Regional Board, EI Board) between the period January 2019 until the Board meeting in May 2019. Members also shared their ideas of what they have planned to submit for Solidarity projects in 2019. Based on the feedback on 2018 projects, members will rework on the proposals keeping the new criterias in mind.



With regard to trial member applications, discussions were held regarding the application received from the organisations based in Cambodia and Nepal. Since the Regional Assembly had been organised in 'Gami Seva Sevana' who had been trial members since last 4 years, members took the opportunity to discuss with their Board members, and to see their activities in the field. Regional Assembly came to a conclusion to break their trial membership of GSS as their forecast plans seems hypothetical, and for main reason that their aim is not coherent with Emmaus principles to work for the vulnerable population.

It was followed by the discussion on 2020 World Assembly. Members shared their positive views on the location of the World Assembly in Latin America. Also members were informed about the elections to be held in 2020, preparations to be made at regional level for upcoming members, and the need to strengthen second line leaders.



Bogra, BANGLADESH: Violence against women is a common feature in Bangladesh, and women face various problems under the system of repression. The main types of the oppression of women include dowry, trafficking, kidnapping, rape, physical torture and acid throwing. Almost every day, women are victimized by these acts of violence and repression. And domestic violence at the hands of husbands is a very routine practice in Bangladesh.

Pollee Unnnyon Prokolpo (PUP) has been working with the poor, destitute, underprivileged village, urban and slum women by providing them income generation opportunity through handicraft skill development training to make them empowered, and develop their socio-economic standard. On *15th October 2018*, PUP observed "**National Village Women Day**" with the handicraft producer groups at their own village.

The discussion was on how women contribute with the overall development process of the country. The economic contribution of women is substantial but largely unacknowledged. Women in rural areas are responsible for most of the post-harvest work, and for keeping livestock, poultry, and small gardens. Women in cities rely on domestic and traditional jobs. Those with more education worked in government, health care, and teaching, but their numbers remained very small. During the discussion session, PUP encouraged the women to develop their skills, which will empower them and gain respect in family and in society. Also the harmful effect of Child Marriage, benefits of Girl's Education, Women Rights were discussed.



Tindivanam - Tamilnadu, S.INDIA: Village Community Development Society (VCDS) organized the awareness rally on 4th December 2018, as a part of 16 days awareness campaign on domestic violence against women. The issue of gender-based violence in India has been creeping up the policy agenda over the past couple of years. Every third women, since the age of 15, has faced domestic violence of various forms in the country, reported the National Family Health

Survey (NHFS-4) released by the Union health ministry. This experience of physical violence among women is more common in rural areas than among women in urban areas. Most of the domestic violence, sexual violence, and marital rape cases in India are also never reported.

VCDS has been regularly organising awareness campaigns on addressing the issues of domestic violence. The rally organised on 4th December started from *Nallalam village*. Ms.Kavitha – Inspector of Police from Brahmadesam, and Mr.Paranthaman – Treasurer of VCDS inaugurated the awareness rally, which passed through 5 villages and ended at Tindivanam. The closing speech was given by Mr.Sethunathan – Advocate from Tindivanam. The rally highlighted on the importance of women protection, importance of girl's education and child rights.



Cuddalore - Tamilnadu, S.INDIA: Florance Home Foundation (FHF) organized various celebrations during festival season in South India between October to December 2018. Children staying in FHF home participated enthusiastically in all these celebrations, and enjoyed the festival

specially on Diwali and Christmas. *Diwali*, as the name replicates, is the festival of lights celebrated across the country with tremendous zeal and enthusiasm. It is the biggest festival of India and no matter which caste or creed one belongs to, one just cannot escape the spirit of the festival of

lights. Special food and sweets were distributed to the children. It brought cute smiles on their innocent faces, and they enjoyed firing crackers, cutting cakes, and welcomed the new year.

Tindivanam - Tamilnadu, S.INDIA:

On 31st December, **Village Community Development Society (VCDS)** organised a year ending evaluation of its activities was conducted with the board and the team of Executive Committee. On 31st evening, New Year welcome celebration was organized with the local village members, teachers, students, staffs and board members of VCDS. *Ms.Kavitha*, Inspector of Police from Brahmadesam, *Mr.Pazhasampath*, Retired Professor from Mailam Arts College participated as chief guests and greeted the children & members of VCDS. They enjoyed the celebrations, and informed that they would never forget the joy that they attained while participating in the celebrations that marked the beginning of the new year.



training programs



Delhi, N.INDIA: *Tara Projects*

Association has been active in *Bawana* community since last two decades. in community development as well as livelihood generation programs through its solidarity actions. TARA is providing education to the poor children through its learning center. The children are also supported through the education sponsorship program. Apart from this, there is also a Library facility available. Other programs like health care support is provided by organizing medical

camps, preventive health awareness sessions, alternative livelihood through micro credit, emergency shelter facility and skill development programs.

TARA had been running **self-defense classes** in *Badarpur* community where more than 30 young girls have been given training. In continuation to this program, it was also felt to start one more training program for the girls in *Bawana*. The environment is not safe for the inhabitants especially for the girls in *Bawana*. Crimes like eve teasing, rapes and domestic violence are

increasing. Often many of these crimes go unreported as the victims and their families are afraid to take actions. Also due to social reasons they do not come forward to protest against the anti-social elements in the area. Therefore, TARA decided to start a self-defense training program in the month of October 2018.

The main objective behind the training program is to support young girls, empower them and also help them to boost their morale and self-confidence. The first batch of trainees comprised of 18 girls. A trained expert provided training. He taught the girls self-defense techniques like mix martial arts, kick-boxing and Yoga. The girls were happy to learn these new techniques and regularly attended the training. The self defense training has given confidence to the girls. They also feel safe now and are able to go out their homes. Many more girls are keen to join the self-defense classes. It is planned that more deserving girls will be enrolled and trained in the coming future. It will help them to learn to defend themselves.



Trichy - Tamilnadu, S.INDIA:

KUDUMBAM organized a three day training on '*Quality seed production*' from 21 to 23 December at Kolunji farm with the inauguration of *Mr.Somasundaram*, District Development Manager, *Mr.Rajasekaran*, and *Mr.Singaram* from NABARD (National bank of Agricultural and Rural development). Around 38 farmers from 3 panchayats participated in the training. The second and third day trainings were conducted in *Nallathangalpatti and Kovilveerakudi*

villages separately. All the above 3 guest speakers shared about the available State schemes for organic cultivation as well as Seed production. As a followup, farmers from all the 3 panchayts showed interest to actively engage themselves in Seed production from next season.

Farmers also agreed to enroll their names for the 'farmers group' to avail PKVY (Parampariyak Kishan Vikas Yoyana). PKVY is an initiative by Indian government to promote organic farming in the country, launched in the year 2015. According to the scheme, farmers will be encouraged to form groups or clusters, and take to organic farming methods over large areas in the country. To avail the scheme, each group must have 50 farmers willing to take up organic farming under PKVY scheme, and possess a total area of atleast 50 acres. Each farmer enrolling in the scheme will be provided two lakhs per acre by the government spread over three years of time.

This fund can be utilized for obtaining organic seed, harvesting of the crops, and transporting the produce to local markets. The government also intends to cover the certification costs, and promote organic farming through the use of traditional resources. Organic food thus produced will be linked with modern marketing tools and local markets.

Farmers who attended the training program at *Kolunji* showed more interest to become a member under this scheme. Also they evolved a plan to establish community Seed Banks in their villages. They would revive Traditional Seed varieties in Millets, Pulses, Rice and vegetables.



Tindivanam - Tamilnadu, S.INDIA: *Village Community Development Society (VCDS)* is involved with 18 schools in non-formal education for democracy (NFED) program for the school dropout children in the rural areas. On *October 22nd 2018*, training on reporting and documentation was organized for the Non-Formal school teachers as a part of their **skill building**

training. 10 Non-Formal schools teachers took part in this training, and *Mr.Paranthaman* - Retired teacher gave the training to the teachers. He highlighted the way of reporting the actions, how a report need to drafted and presented, what kind of documents need to be maintained for a classroom and to the students, description of notes of lesson, etc. All the teachers felt the training program more useful and informative.

Bogra, BANGLADESH: Pollee Unnnyon Prokolpo (PUP) based at *Bogra* in North west part of Bangladesh organised **Skill development training** courses on “Traditional Hand Sewing Embroidery, Block Batik & Hand Brush Paint, Palm Fiber Basketry making, and Tailoring” from *1 August 2018* under the project “Livelihood Development through income generating activities” with the support from Emmaus International. There were 2 batches for each of these 4 courses, with total of 8 batches, and the duration of each training courses were 2 months.



PUP provided this training by selecting youth from the community, who were unemployed, poor and underprivileged, and who were willing to get skill training to become a skill labor or Entrepreneur. Until December 2018, 5 batches of training were completed and another 3 batches are ongoing. Participants who attended the training programmes are ready to get employment opportunity, as they are now skilled with market demand-

oriented jobs. A few of them are taking initiative to start their own businesses. Total 160 youths of the community will get opportunity to develop their skill through this project.

LEBANON NEWS

BEIRUT: Since 2005, YMCA Lebanon (Young Men Christian Association) and Citi Bank partnered together to improve lives of the needy, and support small-scale businesses all across Lebanon. For the year 2018, YMCA distributed awards for winners nominated by 11 Micro-finance Institutions, among which six borrowers from AEP have been awarded.

- *Ghassan Habchy* - a farmer from North Beqaa, won a prize of 2000\$ to establish a drip irrigation system.
- *Lebnen Imad* - carpenter from North Bekaa and owner of a saw-mill, won a prize of 3000\$ to buy new equipments.
- *Joyce Habchi* - a young girl from Mount Lebanon, owner of a barber shop and concept store, won a prize of 3000\$ to buy new products.
- *Khalil el Najjar* - a farmer from North Lebanon, won a prize of 1500\$ to build new tents for vegetables.
- *Moussa Najjar* - a graphic designer from North Lebanon and owner of a printing and drilling press, won a prize of 1500\$ to buy a new machine.
- *Najwa Freijeh* - from Central Bekaa who produces dairy products and homemade foods, won a prize of 1500\$ to buy new products.



Chocolate sales: Every year, AEP renews its commitment to support the artisanal work of nine mothers preparing chocolate during the festive season. This year they were able to prepare 2250 Kilos of special chocolates, and all the benefit went to their families.



Delhi, N.INDIA: On October 9, 2016, about 400 armed men attacked three Border Guard Posts on Myanmar's border with Bangladesh, which is home to 1 million Muslims who call themselves Rohingya. Nine policemen were killed; eight of the attackers lost their lives. Myanmar blamed and launched a massive crackdown on the Rohingyas. Fearing for their safety, thousands of Rohingyas fled across the border to Bangladesh, and to India. The UNHCR says approximately 14,000 Rohingya are spread across six locations in India.





Moon Sharma from *Tara Projects Association* visited Rohingya refugee camps in *Mewat, Haryana*. She visited the camps in her capacity as the Board member of Fair Trade Forum India (FTF-I). The purpose of the visit was to observe the ongoing training programs carried out with the support from UNHCR project in collaboration with FTF-I. The trainings are given to support the refugees to learn and start livelihood generation activities and earn some income. At present, the refugees are living in very difficult conditions and have no regular employment. Previously, Tara team had been visiting and meeting the refugees also in several localities like Sri Ram Colony and Shaheen Bagh in Delhi.



Under the UNHCR project, the refugees are given skill development trainings by FTF-I member organizations. The refugees are learning candle making, embroidery work, Jewellery making, stitching and tailoring. Focused group discussions were also organized with the refugees in Mewat, Haryana. They were given micro credit support to start the income generation activities like selling vegetables, snacks, confectionery and to have tailoring shop. The refugees were also supported to start their own self help bank. In the bank, the refugee members will save every month some amount and will help each other with their savings. The refugees were happy to receive the credit support and to start their own self help bank. During the visit, warm clothes were also distributed to the refugees, especially to women and children. TARA is committed to support the refugees as it is also the part of Emmaus 3 struggles – Peace and freedom of movement and settlement. TARA believe that every human being have a right to migrate, live a secure and peaceful life.

The women refugees from *Afghanistan* also visited TARA premises and met the team. They interacted with the in-house artisans and observed the jewellery crafts produced by them. It was also decided that the refugees will develop some new jewellery designs for Tara. TARA will help them to market their jewellery and provide them much needed income.



ORGANIC Agriculture training

In the third week of October, 20 MSW girl students from Holy Cross College, participated in a 7 day training in Community Development. In the evening, they visited the villages to assess Community participation in managing water bodies and community Seed Banks. They realized the strength of community participation and the impact of knowledge and labour sharing.

During first week of November, a team of 20 ICM Nuns, who manage 10 agriculture farms, schools and hospitals, participated in a



3 day training on how to design an Integrated Farm. Their farms are situated in different parts of Tamilnadu state. Realizing the importance of water conservation, they decided to convert one-fifth of their farms into Farm Ponds and decided to bring 30% of their Farms under tree cover.

The impact of unsuccessful policies of the State has drastically reduced Tree cover. High use of chemical Fertilizers and Pesticides club with recurring drought has made Agriculture unsustainable. Youth are losing Faith in Agriculture, resulting in a high youth migration

from rural areas. In the last week of October and first week of November, around 310 children from 10 schools in Pudukkottai District, planted Seed Balls and tree seedlings in 10 villages on tank bunds, road sides, grazing lands, temple lands and in school premises.

Tindivanam - Tamilnadu, S.INDIA: *Village Community Development Society (VCDS)* is involved with 18 schools in non-formal education for democracy (NFED) program for the school dropout children in the rural areas. Through this, the school dropout children are identified, and are given education through easy learning techniques. Their various skills are identified, and they are motivated to bring out their talents. Between 3rd to 24th of October, Parents-Teachers association (PTA) meetings of the 18 NFED schools were organized at *Karasanur* centre. During this meeting, parents and

Trichy - Tamilnadu, S.INDIA: In the first week of October 2018, seven B.Sc. Agriculture students from JSA college of agriculture, *Cuddalore district* were involved in a comparative study of conventional agriculture and organic agriculture. The ten day study in villages around *Kolunji farm* enlightened them how sustainable agriculture practices increase soil health and productivity.



the teachers shared about the students progress, the difficulties faced by the schools and its teachers, the issues that need to be addressed for the betterment of their village, etc. All the parents and teachers actively participated in this meeting and shared their ideas and reviews.



Cuddalore - Tamilnadu, S.INDIA: On November 14 every year, **Children's Day** is celebrated all across India. The day emphasizes on the importance of giving love, attention and affection to children. On this day, many educational and motivational programs are held across India, by and for children. *Florance Home Foundation* (FHF) celebrated the day

organizing different events in its centre in *Killai*. More than 40 children took part in the events with Board and staff team of FHF, who shared their thoughts on various rights of children keeping education on top priority along with empowering girl child. The day was celebrated with games, and distribution of food, gifts and education materials. Children also performed cultural programs emphasizing on child rights and the importance of education.

CYCLONE GAJA MAKES LANDFALL IN TAMILNADU, LEAVING A TRAIL OF DESTRUCTION

Tamilnadu, S.INDIA: Storms regularly hit southern India between April and December. *CYCLONE GAJA* intensified into a severe cyclone storm on *November 15*, and crossed the south Tamilnadu coast in the early hours of *November 16*. Heavy rain and strong winds have been lashing the coastal areas of Tamilnadu since *15th evening*, with wind speeds gusting to 100 kmph. Cyclone *Gaja* damaged huts, fishing boats and crops to an extent that acres of coconut farms have been razed to the ground. Above seven districts were worst affected, among which *Nagapattinam*, a coastal district in Tamilnadu, is one of the districts that was badly affected, with people losing almost everything they owned, to the gale winds.



The cyclone also wreaked havoc at KOLUNJI FARM in Pudukkottai District, Tamil Nadu. Since the initiation of Kolunji farm in 1990, around 120 different kinds of tree species (fruit, timber, fodder and herbal varieties) has been planted in the farm. Most of them were rare varieties collected from different places, and some of them were drought tolerant. These trees integrated with shrubs, herbs and vegetables together with cows, goats & chickens has resulted in good soil fertility, and



it has helped in converting the barren land into an ecological farm, and has been the standing example for sustainable farming.

Cyclone Gaja has created a serious damage in the Kolunji ecological farm. With more than 3000 trees of different kinds were completely uprooted in a matter of 2 hours of ferocious strong wind on 16th November 2018 early morning which caused painstaking economic loss and environmental damage and completely changed the natural beauty and identity of the farm. Apart from that, the vital units of the farm like nursery plots, bio

input preparation units, thatched cattle sheds, training halls got severely damaged by the heavy wind blow and rain. The fall of huge trees has also damaged the electrical poles, plumbing pipelines in the farm, detached electrical wires and disconnected the power supply.

Because of Cyclone *Gaja*, Cuddalore district has also been moderately affected. Due to the moderate rainfall and winds, there are many instances of trees falling down. The *Florance Home Foundation (FHF)* centre in *Killai* has also seen the effects of cyclone, damaging the kitchen sheds, water tank, electrical and water pipelines, doors & windows, and the fences in FHF farm.



With the support from local university students, Rotary club, Holy Cross College and LIC in Keeranur, KUDUMBAM took up immediate relief activities in 3 villages around Kolunji farm, and distributed Mats, bed-sheets, torch lights, utensils and provisions for 135 families. Both the groups have made an appeal to Emmaus International to support in reestablishing the farm and to repair the damages caused by cyclone Gaja.

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